

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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In These Pages

"Emperor System" Questionnaire	1
Bible Distribution Continues to Amaze	2
Church Constitution Re-Examined	2
Gifts to be Sent to Schools in Remote Areas	3
Gifts for Retired Ministers	3
Kanto Blind Christian Students League	3
Lecture at YWCA	4

"EMPEROR SYSTEM" QUESTIONNAIRE

The Church and Society Study Group of the Kyodan's Evangelism Research Department chose the "Emperor System" as its study problem for this year. As a part of the study a questionnaire was sent out to clergy and laity to learn their feelings concerning the "Emperor System."

This particular problem was selected for study to learn to what extent democracy has permeated the thinking of Japanese Christians; and is also especially pertinent at this time when there are voices calling for revision of the National Constitution and there is a definite movement towards a return of the Yasukuni and other shrines to government management and subsidization. Several members of the Constitution Research Council, a consultative organ for the Cabinet established in 1957, claim the present Constitution is "invalid" and maintain that the prewar Constitution based on Emperor worship is "theoretically" still in force. This view is based on the belief that the present Constitution was forced upon Japan by the Occupation. The majority of the Council believe that the Emperor's status as a symbol of the state requires a clearer definition. The Council, however, has been consistently boycotted by the Opposition parties, and therefore, is made up of only Liberal-Decocrats. Another reason for the selection of this problem for study is that it will also aid in understanding the

spiritual basis of Japanese society which is the soil on which the seeds of the gospel must be planted.

The study was divided into 3 areas: 1) A historial study of the relationship of the emperor system and freedom of belief in Protestant history from the Meiji era to defeat. 2) A study of the problem from the end of the II World War to the present. 3) Collection of materials and carrying out of surveys.

A total of 3,568 questionnaires was sent to 1,620 ministers and evangelists and 1,940 laymen of the United Church. A total of 1,175 (41%) sent in replies, 645 (35%) of the minsters and 831 (51%) of the laymen.

The questionnaire included such questions as the following: Before the war and during the war, when the Emperor was referred to as "personal God" (arahitogami), what did you think of this? Before and during the war, when you were made to worship and make obeisance to the picture of the Emperor, did you feel any problem from the standpoint of your faith? How do you feel about the revival of the singing of the national anthem (Kimigayo)? What do you think of the bringing of the Yasukuni Shrine under Government management? At the end of the questionnaire the participants were asked to relate any experiences of their own where their freedom of belief was hindered because of the "emperor system".

A report on the results of this survey is expected to be compiled and available by the end of this year.

BIBLE DISTRIBUTION CONTINUES TO AMAZE

The fact that the Bible Society of Japan distributed about 2 million Bibles and Testaments in a year in a land where there are at the most only 500,000 Christian continues to amaze all. The Society's annual report explains the method of distribution through strategically located distribution points, through the churches, and through 40 full-time colporters.

During the colporters 8 years of activity, 68% of Japan has been covered geographically and 48% of the population has been contacted by their door-to-door canvassing. Hokkaido Prefecture leads with a total of 894,397 Bibles, followed by Kumamoto Prefecture (Kyushu) with a total of 369,929 Bibles distributed during this eight year period.

Recently, Executive Secretary Miyakoda of the Bible Society stated that the Bible is no longer considered a "western" or "foreign" book by the Japanese. This has been true of the Japanese hymnal (sanbika) for many years already.

CHURCH CONSTITUTION RE-EXAMINED

The Kyodan's Special Committee for Revision of the Church Constitution, Rev. H. Kuwada, chairman, met on November 20, to re-study a draft on the revision of the Church Constituion which had been presented at the last General Assembly. A question arose at

the Assembly concerning whether the District (Kyoku) was a Church (Kyokai) or not.

The Committee, after re-examination of the problem, makes it clear that the Kyodan delegates (inin sure) church functions to the Districts. For example, the Kyodan delegates the ordination of the ministers to the Districts.

After receiving the approval of the Executive Committee, the re-studied draft will be discussed by the various Districts and then presented at the 11th General Assembly next fall.

GIFTS TO BE SENT TO SCHOOLS IN REMOTE AREAS

Every year at Christmas-time, the Japan Church World Service carries out a "Presents of Love" campaign whereby gifts are sent to unfortunate children. This year, with the cooperation of Christian schools in the Tokyo and Kanagawa areas, presents will be sent to schools in remote sparts of Tohoku (northeast Japan).

Fort-seven primary and jr. high schools with a fifth class rating and a total student enrollment of only 882 have been selected to receive the gifts. The largest of these schools has an enrollment of 93 and the smallest has only 2 pupils enrolled. Many of the families are pioneer farmers who are attempting to pay off debts, or fisherman who have no cash income because of a poor fishing season.

Besides cash gifts, stationary, books, sports equipment and old clothing will be collected and sent with letters from Christian students attending the 23 Christian schools in the Tokyo and Kanagawa areas.

A truck will be sent out by Church World Service to collect goods at the schools and other points between December 21 to 26 and cash donations will be received at CWS headquarters until December 27.

GIFTS FOR RETIRED MINISTERS

The Social Committee of the United Church of Christ in Cooperation with Japan Church World Service will collect 500,000 yen from churches all over Japan in order to present Christmas gifts to retired ministers, ministers who have been ill over a long period, financially impoverished ministers, and families of the ministers who have died.

Some 90 Social Work Institutions along with about 250 ministers will receive a cash gift besides some clothing and food from Church World Service.

The Shin-Ai-So, a home where many retired ministers and their families stay will receive 200,000 yen.

KANTO BLIND CHRISTIAN STUDENTS LEAGUE

A meeting of the Kanto area Blind Christian Students League was held on Thanks-giving Day. About 70 students from Jr. High

and Sr. High Schools for the blind in the Kanto area met under the theme "Walk as a Child of Light."

Rev. Yoichiro Saeki, UCC pastor of Shinagawa church, spoke on "How to Live (As individuals and as Neighbors)". An informal discussion followed on life and faith.

LECTURE AT YWCA

Dr. Earle Reynolds, lecturer at Hiroshima Jogakuin University, and his son Ted Reynolds, student at International Christian University will deliver a lecture at Tokyo YWCA, on Saturday, December 9.

The title of the lecture is "Individual Action in the Nuclear Age".

The Reynolds recently sailed their yacht Phoenix to Nakhodka to protest the Soviet nuclear tests. In 1958, they sailed as a protest into the Pacific area restricted by the U.S. for nuclear testing.

They will relate their experiences and tell of their "conviction that direct communication between the peoples of the world is the important element in reconciliation and for finding peace, and that this is something each individual can do."

The program is sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, the Brethren Service Commission, the Japan Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Mennonite Central Committee, and the Peace Committee of Japan Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. (Asahi Eve. News)

